

Right Here All Along

by 10velyfe

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Summary: Post-movie. Astrid & Hiccup are to be married soon, but Hiccup is torn between the commitment & Toothless. Toothless disappears & when he returns, he's... Different. What's wrong with Toothless? Can Hiccup fix him? What will become of their relationship?

1. Musings

Hello fellow HTTYD fans~! I'm pleased to present to you my first HTTYD fanfic.

>I fell in love with this movie when I first saw it, but it took me forever to

>finally get around to writing a fanfiction. I've also read the first three books.

_As far as this story goes, yes, it is a Toothcup piece, and I'm 100% sure there

>_will be no Anthro-Toothless. I'm not sure about how I'm going to handle the

>_intimacy between them, because I've never written anything between a human

>_and a creature that is so unlike a human. But I'll tackle that when I get there._

So, for now, this story will be rated T for a few chapters, but in the M

>category for future chapters. I know it's a bit slow now but it'll get
much more intense in the next chapter!_

So, enjoy! Reviews would be lovely~!

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><p>Right Here All Along

Chapter One

Written by Illuminate the Shadows

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><p>"Hiccup!"

Crystal blue eyes were approaching rapidly. Blonde hair flew in the air. He braced himself for the impact that never came.

Opening his eyes hesitantly, he found he stood face to face with pale emerald orbs instead. He understood why some mistook him for a devil. With pupils like slits contrasting against jet black scales, the beast was sleek and lethal. But as he reached out a steady hand, those pupils widened to a friendly roundness and the dragon butted Hiccup's palm with his warm forehead.

Reality came rushing back as green eyes opened to take in the wooden dresser beside his bed. Unsure of what to make of such an ominous dream, the boy sat up and ran a hand through his already ruffled hair. It was still dark outside, with dawn or sleep nowhere in sight. Exhaling heavily, Hiccup got out of bed and snatched his coat from his desk before stumbling out into the cold winter night.

Toothless wasn't out back like he usually was. Figuring the dragon must have gone hunting, Hiccup retreated into the forest alone; perhaps not the smartest thing to do, but, then again, Hiccup had never been one to think rationally when he was upset. Fallen branches cracked under his boots. Although the threat of dragons was presumably gone, other predators still lurked in the forest, and Hiccup had only his trusty knife to defend himself. The first snow of the season was yet to come. Hiccup felt as if he was already treading on thin ice.

He could remember how he idolized Astrid in his younger days. Such an admiration probably hadn't been the best way to begin a relationship, but, nonetheless, his affection for her had changed over time. He went from holding her on a pedestal to developing a crush on her. And soon, he had found himself in love with her. Somewhere deep down, he had known she loved him too. She was stubborn. And maybe that game of hard-to-get was exactly what had kept him going.

Now that he finally had her " that he had pursued her for years and it had finally paid off " he felt his affection dwindling. He knew it was expected of them to marry and have children. He knew many would attend the wedding of the Viking chief-to-be of Berk; perhaps even some from other tribes. He knew many would kill to stand in his place; to hold the heart of the feisty Astrid and the title of "Clan Hero." But, honestly, he wanted none of it. He didn't want the attention or sense of pride. He didn't want the gifts. And he certainly didn't want Astrid as his wife.

His dream had been an accurate interpretation of his feelings recently. A wince at the sound of Astrid's voice. The sweet melody had once erupted butterflies within his stomach. But instead of the girl who loved him, a dragon had taken her place.

He found that while he didn't want anything to do with Berk, the skies and forest were another story. As each day wore on he looked

forward to seeing Toothless more and more. The NightFury's presence was comforting, and he understood more than any Viking could without uttering a single word. Hiccup lived for the few hours before bed when he could finally get away from the chores and people and soar through the clouds with his best friend.

A soft crooning broke the young Viking's concentration. Spinning around, he laid eyes upon a large-pupiled Toothless. The tail of a fish was hanging from his mouth carelessly, and his head was tilted slightly to the side. Hiccup grinned and leapt down from the rock he'd been seated upon.

"Toothless, bud!" Said reptile slurped the fish down his throat before the boy's small arms came around his sleek neck. The gesture, Toothless had decided, was one of affection. He had observed it amongst the Vikings, and Hiccup had embraced him like this once before when Toothless had returned from retrieving the boy's helmet from the sea. It was an act of appreciation that Toothless couldn't quite reciprocate properly. So he stood motionlessly, enjoying the proximity of the boy, until Hiccup moved back. Large green eyes settled on his face, and then the dragon's ears flattened upon his head. Puzzled, Hiccup watched those eyes come closer and closer until a wide, semi-smooth tongue darted out to lick his cheek.

"Ugh, Toothless!" Smirking, Hiccup wiped the dragon slobber from his right cheek while simultaneously wiping his left with his other hand. He blinked as fingertips touched his jaw where a tear had traced. He hadn't even known he'd been crying. Emitting a small whine, Toothless nudged his hand.

"It's alright bud," Hiccup murmured, wiping his cheeks on his sleeve. "I'm alright." The dragon didn't look convinced. Hiccup sighed and took a step back. His prosthetic leg caught on a branch and he stumbled, ending up sitting down on the ground. He wiped his cheek again. Toothless circled and curled himself around the teen. The scaly body was warm, and the long tail draped itself over his lap like a blanket. Hiccup ran his fingers over the single ribbed fin upon the tail, recalling the day he shot Toothless out of the sky with the Bolas-Shooting Ballista and caused the injury. He gazed down at his own prosthetic leg. Had he not been so keen to please his father that night, neither accidents would have happened.

"But then I never would have met you..." he mumbled. Toothless gazed down at him with narrowed eyes, seemingly not at all confused by the unexplained sentence. Hiccup knew he understood. Somehow.

"Everything's just so hard now, bud. The village expects so much of me. I'm expected to marry Astrid." Toothless let out a small huff. "You're telling me." Hiccup rested the back of his head on the dragon's shoulder. "I mean, I still care about her. But things just haven't been the same." Hiccup felt, rather than heard, the dull rumble within the dragon's chest. "I'm afraid she'll be so controlling. She's already jealous of you now. She hates how I spend more time with you than her. I mean, if we're married, she won't want me to spend any time with you!"

Hiccup was startled by the snarl that ripped from Toothless' throat. Reaching out, he touched his snout, calming him down.

"Don't worry Toothless. I would never let that happen. You know how much you mean to me." Letting out a little purr, the NightFury nuzzled the boy's palm, coiling his tail tighter around their bodies.

"Do you mind if I stay here tonight? I'll head back in the morning before anyone misses me."

Delighted at the prospect of spending more time with his keeper, Toothless wriggled and burrowed his snout into the teen's hair. Hiccup chuckled. "Good to know I'm welcome." After scratching the dragon's shoulder for a moment " which caused Toothless' hind leg to twitch " Hiccup hunkered down for the remainder of the night.

"Night bud."

Toothless rumbled a goodnight of his own before Hiccup began to drift off to sleep, warm and secure in the cocoon created by the NightFury.

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><p>Somewhere deep inside the small body beside him, Toothless could feel the life beating steadily. Such a sound comforted the dragon. He would sacrifice anything to ensure that the boy's heart kept beating. He sighed through his nostrils. Although, humans did not live long. The NightFury didn't fully understand humans' concept of time, but he knew that he had seen many, many winters and still felt quite youthful. The elder dragons told stories of a time when there were no humans, which seemed to be very long ago. They also told him that the NightFury was something of a deity; the most skilled of the dragons, and nearly immortal. That was something Toothless wish he could offer the oh-so frail body curled up next to him. He longed to wrap part of his heart up in those wooden boxes that the Vikings called 'presents' and give it to Hiccup so he, too, could live for a very long time.<p>

The NightFury was anything but oblivious. The dragons understood more about the humans than the humans understood about them. It had always been that way. Even with the recent breakthrough Hiccup had initiated, Toothless still felt as if the Vikings had much to learn. No, Toothless understood what was happening. He knew that his rider was to be mated with Astrid. He knew Hiccup did not want to disappoint anyone. Yet he also caught on to Hiccup's true feelings. The boy did not want to become her lifemate. He did not share her eagerness and affection.

Hiccup had mentioned a word many times " mostly when he was explaining that he didn't reciprocate Astrid's feelings. _Love_. Toothless could compare the word to the feelings dragons were supposed to share with their lifemate. The bond that kept them together for winters and winters repeated. The unspoken attachment that dragons felt for their mates was similar to the humans' marriage.

The NightFury gazed down at his keeper. Had Hiccup loved Astrid and wanted to be bonded with her for the rest of his life then Toothless felt as if he would have to let him go. He cared about the boy too much to obstruct his happiness. But that was not the case. The dragon

could see that Hiccup would not be happy with Astrid. And yes, he could afford to let him make such a mistake. He could afford it, because humans did not view the bond like the dragons did. Hiccup had explained "divorce" once to him. Toothless could relate it to **death**. If a dragon did such a thing, they would die. Because once a dragon was set on his lifemate and it was done, there was no going back. No "divorce." Toothless would have enjoyed telling Hiccup this, but the boy could not comprehend his language, and he did not possess the ability to speak within like dragons did.

So much musing over mates made the NightFury feel uneasy. He was not sure why, but he disliked the feeling. He ducked his head and buried his nose in the boy's shoulder, inhaling his scent. The prickling of his scale ceased. Hiccup made a soft noise and shivered in his sleep. Whatever was coming, he could handle it. He would protect his keeper with his own life. It was as close to giving the boy his heart as he was going to get.

2. Gone

Argggg this chapter is so short!_

>I apologize, but I've been quite sick the past few days.

>I'm getting better slowly, and I managed to finally type

>this up and submit it here for you guys.

You'll all probably be left with some questions after this

>chapter because it ends with a little cliffhanger, but

>you'll just have to wait until chapter three!

Enjoy! Thank you for all the reviews, and keep them coming please!

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><p>Right Here All Along

**Chapter Two**

Written by Illuminate the Shadows

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><p>The flapping of wings and the snarl of a Nadder alerted Hiccup before he pulled a shirt over his head. He stuffed his foot into his boot and took the stairs as quickly as he could with his leg. He couldn't ever remember being in such a hurry to see Astrid, but maybe she had seen something.<p>

"Good morning sleepyhead," Astrid greeted him cheerfully, leaping off Stormfly and leaning in for a kiss. Hiccup obliged halfheartedly and then looked at her anxiously.

"Have you seen him?"

"Who's him?" _

"Toothless!" he exclaimed in exasperation.

Her smile fell slightly at his tone. "Not today." Hiccup's gaze fell. If the dragon hadn't come back to Berk, then where had he gone? "Relax. I'm sure he just went hunting."

"He went hunting yesterday," Hiccup mumbled, not interested in explaining to Astrid how he had spent the night with the dragon in the forest and that, when dawn had come, Toothless had disappeared. The female Viking didn't approve of her husband-to-be running around with a NightFury at odd hours. Not because Toothless was dangerous â€" because she felt threatened by the bond the two had formed. She was jealous. Never in Hiccup's wildest dreams had he imagined he'd be caught in between a dragon and the beautiful Astrid.

"Well, I'm sure he'll come back soon. Where could he have gone without you?"

The girl had a decent point. Somewhat comforted, Hiccup allowed a smile to cross his face. "Speaking of hunting... I was just about to go. Wanna tag along?"

Hiccup hesitated. Although he was unsure of their relationship as far as romance went, he still enjoyed her company most of the time. And he had been neglecting to spend time with her lately. "Just us?"

"And Stormfly." She smirked.

"Alright, let me go grab a bite to eat, then we'll go."

At her nod, he turned and made his way to the dining hall and was greeted by a chorus of "Hi Hiccup!" Grimacing and waving, he headed over to the table where the twins and Snotlout were sitting. Even after all this time, he still wasn't used to his fame.

"Hey Hiccup," Ruff offered. Tuff nodded and Snotlout, with a mouthful of food, waved.

"Hey guys. Have any of you seen Toothless?"

The twins shook their head, but Snotlout slammed his hand down on the table. Hiccup jumped, startled, and the three looked at Snotlout expectantly. He swallowed the food in his mouth, and then spoke.

"I was flying with Hookfang this morning and I saw him running! I kinda thought he was just hunting," the Viking said sheepishly.

"Where at?"

"Uhh... Near the cliff."

"Thanks Snotlout. Oh, can I, uh, have a piece of that?" He nodded and held out a piece of the meat. "Thanks. See you guys later."

Hiccup stood and headed down the aisle. Just as he pushed the heavy oak door open, he nearly ran into a large figure over twice his size.

"Oh, sorry... Dad! Hey..."

Stoick looked down at the young Viking. "Where ya off to so early, son?"

"Just uh, going hunting with Astrid."

"Astrid?" Stoick looked pleasantly surprised. "You're going hunting? Now?"

"Yep..." Hiccup rocked back and forth on his feet. "Right now."

"That's my boy." The chief punched the small boy on the shoulder, causing him to stumble and nearly drop the piece of meat still in his hand. "It's high time we started planning the wedding, don't ya think?"

"Whoa, wedding...?" Hiccup had known all along that this was coming, but this was the first time his father had ever mentioned it. He tried not to panic. "Aren't we kind of... I dunno, young?"

"Nonsense! Why, I was just your age when I married your mother!" Stoick looked a bit put-out for a moment, and then he smiled and slapped his son on the back joyfully. "The marriage of Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third and the beautiful Astrid Hofferson. What an event!" The large Viking wandered around his son and into the hall, still muttering excitedly to himself, and Hiccup sighed and bit into the meat. It was sheep. Chewing and swallowing thickly, he headed back to where Astrid and Stormfly were waiting for him.

* * *

><p>A mere three sunsets had come and gone, and Toothless was already overcome with the feeling of missing his rider. His best friend. His keeper. It made it difficult to focus on the task at hand- err, paw. He rumbled to himself as he settled down to sleep within the burnt, crusty ashes that had previously been grass. Being without the boy was proving to be difficult. But so was his journey. He was frustrated, hungry, and longed to fly. He missed the salmon Hiccup used to catch for him. The Viking always managed to net the plumpest ones.<p>

How much longer could he afford to search? How long until the effects would weaken him to the point where he could look no more? How long could he stand to be away from his keeper? And how long until Hiccup began to search for him? He didn't want to disrupt the boy's life. In fact, he was partially hoping that, without his presence there to distract him, Hiccup would regain his feelings for the Viking girl and be able to enjoy his marriage. The dragon's existence had already unsettled Hiccup's life enough. He just wanted him to be truly happy.

The NightFury sighed. Not being able to fly was hindering his search. He concluded that he would have to swim across the ocean to reach some of the other islands. Perhaps not all hope was lost.

As he slept, the dragon dreamt of the elder dragons telling the tale

of the elusive NightFury to him when he was just a youngling. He had been the only one of his kind even then, on the whole island. And even though he had been quite capable of defending himself " even at such a small size " he recalled the clan protecting him fiercely. The elders told him it was because he was the last leader born amongst the dragons. The final NightFury.

When Toothless awoke at dawn, he headed straight for the ocean. He refused to believe such a nightmare.

3. Silence

Here's chapter three!

The plot thickens in this chapter and I'm looking
>forward to writing the next few pieces! I have to

>say, that one of you already guessed what's
>happening to Toothless! As a side note, thank
>you for all the reviews so far!

One more thing... I made the decision to
>assume that dragons talk telepathically.
>It seems simple and logical. They can make
>noises like growls and roars but they
>usually just talk to each other silently.

Enjoy! R&R!

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><p>Right Here All Along

**Chapter Three**

Written by Illuminate the Shadows

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><p>Four weeks. Four long, tedious, uneventful weeks.<p>

It seemed like a lifetime to Hiccup.

He kept telling himself that it was for the best; that the Gods wanted and had planned this. Without the dragon around, he could focus on his life and other relationships " especially with Astrid. And that was really all he'd done for the past month; spend time with the female Viking. They went hunting, fishing, explored caves, climbed trees, swam in the lake. He showed her how to weld and she taught him to sew. He felt the affection slowly returning, as if it had just been masked all along. He couldn't help but wonder if Toothless had left with the very purpose of letting Hiccup and Astrid bond again.

But still, he was unsure of himself. Each morning, he would roll over in bed and gaze out the window to the spot where Toothless would bed down at night. He never slept in the nursery with the other dragons. He had been gone so long that the grass had begun to grow back. One afternoon, Hiccup went down and sat in that spot while he sketched.

It made him feel close to his friend.

Between hunting, Astrid, wedding plans and the various other chores around the village, Hiccup had been busy enough to keep his mind from really missing Toothless. But nights were bad. The darkness reminded him too much of the NightFury. He felt weak, crying over a simple dragon. But then he reminded himself that Toothless was no ordinary dragon, and the bond they shared was stronger than any Viking on Berk or anywhere could ever understand.

Now, here he stood in the tailor's shop, being measured by the woman who would make his traditional leather and fur outfit. His sword and ring were on his dresser in his room, and they had practiced the ceremony over and over until he was sure it would be engraved into his brain forever. Tradition demanded that the bride and groom not see each other until the vows, so Astrid had retreated into her house.

"All set, dear," the woman murmured. "Now, go get a good night's rest. You have a big day ahead of you tomorrow."

He nodded and mumbled thanks, but the boy really had no intention of going home to bed. He knew he wouldn't sleep a wink.

And so, he wandered out into the center of town, seeing only a few Vikings still finishing chores. They smiled and nodded, but didn't speak a word, staying true to the vow of silence. There was a hush over Berk like there had never been before. Even the dragons were quiet in the distance. The stillness unsettled Hiccup. He sat on the edge of the fountain and gazed up at the starry night sky.

Not knowing where his friend was frightened him. What if Toothless never came back? The only other time he had run off was to retrieve Hiccup's lost helmet. He'd had a way of flying by himself then. And he had also only been gone for a few short days. Hiccup sighed, remembering his journey to the island on Meatlug. All the dragons had been there with their babies. His eyebrows furrowed. Why hadn't Toothless gone too?

Two answers immediately sprang to mind. The first was obvious; Toothless was a male dragon and he didn't need to lay eggs. The second was because Toothless didn't have another NightFury to mate with.

Hiccup's eyes widened. Was that where Toothless had gone? Had he left in search of a mate? Hiccup could only recall ever seeing a NightFury once in his lifetime before meeting Toothless. He had been eight years old. But who was to say that dragon hadn't been Toothless as well?

A sudden rustle in the bushes at the edge of the forest startled him out of his thoughts. Peering through the darkness, he wondered if it might be one of his friends, pulling a prank on him or trying to scare him. Was there another tradition he didn't know about? He squinted.

"... Stormfly?"

The blue Naddar took a few steps toward him on her hind legs and let out a loud roar. Opening his mouth to tell her to be quiet, Hiccup

froze. There was something else moving behind her; something that Hiccup hadn't noticed before because it was so dark itself.

"_**... Toothless...!"**_

His yell broke the sacred silence that covered the town like a blanket. Hiccup's limping run just wasn't fast enough. No gait would have been fast enough. He smiled, running toward his long-lost friend.

Hiccup was only a dragon-length away when Toothless' legs gave out. With a low groan, he fell over onto his side. Hiccup's grin instantly fell along with his companion, and his eyes widened.

"Toothless...?"

* * *

><p>It was a relief, to finally be in such a familiar place, with so many familiar scents surrounding him. Especially one in particular.<p>

The very sound of the boy's voice warmed the cold-blooded reptile. But he was very weak. He had searched for a long time. It wouldn't be long now.

Hiccup had fallen to his knees beside the NightFury, gently probing and feeling his scaly body for injuries. Toothless knew he would find none. Others were beginning to crowd around the trio. He knew it was late and humans liked to sleep at night, but many of them looked exceptionally upset.

'_Tonight there was a vow of silence,' _the nearby Naddar answered his unvoiced question. _'Some sort of tradition before their wedding.' _

So they hadn't been married yet. Toothless found it strange that he now felt well enough to sit up. The weakness in his body had subsided a bit.

"Maybe he's starving..." Hiccup turned, raising his voice from murmur to yell. "Somebody go get me a basket of fish!" Toothless nudged the boy's shoulder gently to regain his attention. Hiccup gazed into the light emerald orbs, and Toothless didn't like the concern there. He wanted to tell the boy not to worry. He needn't be afraid. He had his whole life ahead of him.

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><p>'We need to find a way to tell the humans.

'_How are we supposed to do that?_' Hookfang shook the rain droplets from her scales, joining the dragons in the nook of the cave. The three were huddled together, away from the other dragons, save for Meatlug, who was asleep nearby. _'They don't speak like us.' _

'_Why're you so keen on Hiccup knowing, Storm?_' _one half of the Zippleback asked. _'Yeah, you know if the Fury isn't around, then

your Astrid will have him all to herself,' _the other chimed in.

'_Huff, Puff, leave it alone.' _Meatlug murmured from the corner. All three dragons looked at her, unaware that she was awake and listening to their conversation._ 'Stormfly cares for Astrid as the Fury cares for Hiccup. I'm sure she realizes the consequences of their marriage are, and she will miss Astrid, as the Fury will miss Hiccup.'_

'_The Fury bought some time with returning tonight. I overheard the leader talking to Astrid's mother, and they're postponing the wedding.'_

'_Yeah, you ruined their sacred vow of silence,'_ Puff chortled.

'_This is bigger than just us and a Viking wedding.' _Hookfang's murmur was impatient._ 'Toothless is the last NightFury we have. The last leader out there. We can't just let him die off like this...'_

'_Hook, you know that the Fury can't actually reproduce with the boy, right?' _Huff snorted.

'_Of course I know that! I'm just saying that if the Fury finds a mate... Remember what the elders used to tell us? The NightFury lives for more seasons than we will ever see and is still young.'_

'_Hiccup won't live that long.'_

'_We need to focus on now, Huff,' _Meatlug chimed in once again, one eye open this time._ 'The Fury needs Hiccup now. Since there are no other NightFury, the boy is the best bet he has. It will be interesting to see if the Fury can take him as his lifemate.'_

'_It certainly hasn't been done before.'_

_Meatlug raised her head. 'How right you are, Stormfly.' _She stomped her foot once._ 'Now, we must think of a way to tell the humans. And we must do it quick. The Fury doesn't have much time.'_

4. Life

Hey guys. So this chapter skips around>a lot, and I apologize for that. It kind of>changes perspectives as time passes>rather quickly, and a lot of stuff happens.>The end nearly had me crying as I>wrote it. Oops, I've said too much!

Anyway, hope you enjoy and R&R please~

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><p>Right Here All Along

**Chapter Four**

Written by Illuminate the Shadows

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><p>"I can't find anything wrong with him."<p>

Astrid hated hearing Hiccup sound so desperate. It reminded her of how weak he truly was when it came to pure strength and combat skills. He sounded like the old Hiccup that the village had once shunned, and she didn't like it. Attempting to distract him, she put a hand on his shoulder lightly.

"Hiccup, maybe he's just sick. Maybe he ate some bad fish while he was off exploring."

"It just doesn't add up, Astrid." Hiccup turned away as the dragon fell into a restless sleep. "Why did he leave in the first place? What was he looking for?"

Astrid shrugged, although she knew he hadn't been directly asking her for an answer. Hiccup's guess was as good â€" if not better â€" than hers. Sometimes she thought she understood the dragons when she spoke to Stormfly, but then she realized that they were still a complete mystery to her.

"Hiccup!" The door swung open and slammed against the wood of the shed, causing both humans to jump and Toothless to awaken, startled. Fishlegs stood in the doorway, panting. "The elder thinks she knows what's wrong with him."

* * *

><p>In all his years living in Berk, Hiccup had never heard the elder speak. She was the oldest Viking in the village and had six children and seventeen grandchildren; two of which being Ruffnut and Tuffnut. Her voice was soft, yet held experience that captured and demanded the attention of those around her. When she spoke, those within earshot listened.<p>

"Dragons are loyal creatures," she murmured. "To their brothers and sisters, once to the Red Death, and, as you recently discovered, young Hiccup, to us." Hiccup nodded, gripping the material of his pants on the knees. He was anxious. "Dragons are also loyal to their mates. They stay with them for life." Hiccup knew that eagles did the same; it wasn't unusual in nature. But something clicked in his head.

"Is that where Toothless went? To find a mate?"

The elder smiled knowingly. "You are bright, young man. Yes, the NightFury â€" your Toothless â€" was searching... Although, I do not believe he found what he was looking for. Dragons have an instinct to find a mate; to procreate and make more dragons, and if they do not abide this instinct..."

"Wait, are you saying Toothless is sick because he can't find another NightFury to mate with?"

"I believe it's a strong possibility."

Hiccup rose to his feet. "Then I'm not gonna sit around and watch him die. I'm gonna find another NightFury."

"Hiccup."

Her gaze was steady, and he expected her to tell him that such a mission was too dangerous or too hopeless. People had been telling him that the world was too dangerous for him since he could crawl. Toothless had saved his life countless times. He'd risk anything for him. He straightened his spine as she stood up beside him, circling around the stool, and touched his wrist.

"May the Gods be with you, son."

* * *

><p>'I still can't believe they figured it out so quickly.'

'_I'm still not sure this is the right thing to do,' _Storm glanced sideways at Hookfang._ 'I mean, the Fury was doing better with Hiccup by his side.'_

'_What does he think he's going to find out there? Another NightFury?'_

'_That's exactly what he thinks. For all he knows, there are others. Face it Hook, we don't know any different either.'_

'_Yeah, but if there are any more out there, the Fury won't live long enough to meet them.' _The Nightmare glanced at the Naddar._ 'We both know he doesn't have much time left. I think the boy is his best bet.'_

'_Hook, you __**know**__ that's not how these things work!_' Stormfly stomped her foot impatiently._ 'We can't intervene! We have to let them decide. It has to be natural. No convincing, no suggestions.'_

"Ready girl?"

Stormfly turned her head as Astrid tightened the leather saddle upon her back. While she would accompany Hiccup and a few others on a mission in vain, Snotlout had been asked by Hiccup himself to stay behind and watch Toothless.

'_Good luck,' _Hookfang's voice was half-sarcastic and half-defeated.

The Naddar spread her wings and glanced toward the cabin where the fallen NightFury lie. _'You too.'_

A reassuring hand patted Hookfang's shoulder, and she glanced sideways at her human. "Don't worry. They'll be back soon. And then Toothless will get better," Snotlout murmured.

Hookfang wished she could tell the boy just how wrong he was.

* * *

><p>"C'mon boy, you gotta eat."<p>

Snotlout pushed the salmon closer to the NightFury's mouth, but Toothless only stared at it with dull eyes from his lying position on the wooden floor of the shop. Snotlout sighed in defeat and sat back on his feet.

"He's dyin', ain't he."

The boy jumped; he hadn't even heard Gobber come in. The large man stood behind him, leaning against the wall.

"He won't eat... He's been like this for two days." Snotlout shook his head, gazing at his cousin's ill dragon. "I can't do anything to make him get up."

Gobber stared at the dragon, watching its chest move up and down slowly. "I think we should send out a party to find Hiccup and bring him home. He's run out of time."

And so it was Snotlout and several other Vikings that were sent to retrieve Hiccup so he could be with his dragon before he passed.

* * *

><p>Hiccup twitched in his sleep, dreaming of Toothless yet again. He'd dreamt of him every night since they'd left on their journey to find another NightFury. So far, they'd come up empty-handed. Hiccup found it difficult to fall asleep when all he could think about was Toothless' life ticking away with each hour. He didn't know how much more time he had. He was willing to admit it; he was scared. The boy huddled closer to the Naddar, feeling Astrid move against him. Her head rested on his slim shoulder.<p>

She'd hidden her disappointment well, but Hiccup knew better. She was upset. He couldn't really blame her. The anticipation of the wedding had built up over the span of a month, and then it was ruined. But she also knew that Hiccup's loyalty lay partially with Toothless, and he cared about him deeply. Although Hiccup knew he would never tell Astrid, he thought his loyalty lay more with Toothless than his wife-to-be.

A sudden gust of chilly air woke him from his slumber. Arching his back in a stretch â€" carefully as not to wake Astrid â€" he raised his head to peek over Stormfly's wing. It was dark, and a fresh dusting of snow had covered the ground. Hiccup could hear Fishlegs snoring, and see half of Meatlug's body huddled beside Stormfly. The wind whistled in the trees around them.

It was then that Hiccup noticed movement off in the distance in the thick night air. The figure itself was dark in colour as well, but too large to be a panther. It had to be a dragon. He squinted as it came closer and two large eyes, yellow-emerald, gazed back at him. He sat up, waking Astrid, and she mumbled a complaint. Hiccup ignored her. The set of eyes blinked.

"Toothless...?" Hiccup whispered, climbing to his feet.

"Hiccup!"

* * *

><p>Hiccup cried for the entire span of the flight home. Perhaps it wasn't the most heroic or manly thing to do, but he cried. Tears spilled down his cheeks as he held onto Astrid for balance. The Naddar sped through the night, but it wasn't fast enough. Hiccup feared Toothless would be dead by the time they returned. From the way Snotlout described him, he sounded as if he'd been barely alive when the party left to find him. What if he didn't make it?<p>

Finally, after what seemed like a lifetime, Berk's lights became visible in the distance. Hiccup managed to pull himself together as they descended into the village, and he leapt down from Stormfly's back before her feet even touched the ground. He nearly fell as his half-prosthetic leg threatened to give out, but he regained his balance and hobbled past the fountain in the center of town. There were many people standing around, but no one spoke a word. Hiccup looked around for a sign of the state of his dragon, but all heads were bowed. Nervousness settled in the pit of his stomach and he limped as quickly as his leg would allow.

He practically threw open the door to the workshop, coming face-to-stomach with Gobber.

"Hiccup! Glad you'reâ€" "

"Is he?"

The Viking's smile fell and he hesitated too long for Hiccup's patience, so the boy pushed his way around him and ran to the space that had been cleared of tools to accommodate the dragon. Hiccup's intestines tied themselves in knots. The large black lump lay on its side, motionless. His breath caught in his throat and the tears returned to gather in his eyes. He was too late.

He stumbled over to the unmoving figure, blurry vision making it difficult to see. He fell to his knees beside his dragon and let his head hang, shoulders shaking with silent sobs. Gobber stepped outside quietly, leaving the boy to his grief. He was greeted with curious stares, stricken with grief. Stoic stepped forward hesitantly, and when Gobber shook his head, the chief began to head for the door. Gobber grabbed his wrist.

"Leave him be. He needs time."

Suddenly, as if on cue, the sky opened up and it began to pour heavily. Hiccup's sobs were not so silent anymore. The village listened to their savior's cried of despair and sorrow, while their other savior lay lifeless. There were no words to describe the anguish that surrounded Berk.

Within the shop, Hiccup reached out to rest his hand on Toothless' chest, tears seeping into his dark scales. "Toothless, no... Don't leave me. Please. I love you, bud..."

A soft thump against his palm caught Hiccup's attention.

Ba-bum.

His eyes widened. "... Toothless...?"

Ba-bum.

Golden-green eyes opened slowly and the NightFury's body gave a little shake. Frozen, Hiccup whispered the dragon's name again.

"Toothless...?"

The reptile raised his head weakly and fixed Hiccup with an affectionate gaze that seemed to say, _"Don't cry. I'm here."_

End
file.